

**Program:** Strategic Planning  
**Date of Adoption:** 26 October 2022  
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**Scope**

This policy applies to all Mackay Regional Council (MRC) activities and staff. MRC recognises that climate change represents a material risk to MRC operations and sustainable development in the Mackay region.

**Objective**

The objective of the Climate Change Policy is to:

- a) Demonstrate that MRC is a leader in identifying and managing climate-related risks and adaption actions.
- b) Ensure long term risk, strategy and planning processes incorporate consistent, timely and scientifically sound information and local climate projections related to climate change.
- c) Ensure that climate risk management is a core component of planning for a more resilient organisation and regional community and is therefore mainstreamed into MRC's functions and activities.
- d) Ensure that the Mackay region is well placed to benefit from sustainable development opportunities that may eventuate from taking a proactive approach to climate risk management.

**Policy Statement**

Therefore, MRC is committed to:

- Taking a leadership approach in managing the risks associated with climate change for our community.
- Adopting a structured and strategic response to the potential impacts and opportunities that may eventuate from climate change; and
- Facilitating greater awareness of the causes and effects of climate change.

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This process to remain in force until otherwise determined  
 by Mackay Regional Council

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**1.0 Principles**

The need for a climate change policy was initially identified through MRC’s participation in the Local Government Association of Queensland’s Coastal Adaptation Taskforce (C-CAT). This policy also reinforces MRC’s commitment to effectively managing climate-related risks as a long-standing member of the Queensland Climate Resilient Council program.

MRC acknowledges that climate change presents both challenges and opportunities for the future of the Mackay region. It has the potential to impact private and public property, infrastructure, natural systems, human health, agriculture, and the economy. MRC has a responsibility to manage risks to public assets (including the environment), delivering community services and supporting private resilience and action within the community

Modelling shows that over time, the Mackay region will be exposed to:

- Increases in average, maximum and minimum temperatures.
- More hot days and increase in the frequency and duration of extreme temperatures.
- Increased intensity of extreme rainfall events.
- Mean sea level rise and increases in the height of extreme sea level events.
- Fewer but more intense tropical cyclones.
- More extreme fire behaviour.
- Increases in evapotranspiration in all seasons.
- Warmer and more acidic oceans.

MRC commits to effectively managing climate-related risks to enhancing the resilience of our organisation and the capacity of our communities, infrastructure and natural areas to recover from stresses while maintaining function and identity.

Effective climate risk management can be achieved by integrating the following principles across our organisation and into our way of thinking and acting as opposed to achieving a specific end point or goal.

**1.1 Principles for Effective Climate Risk Management**

Principle	Outcome
MRC will use the best available science and sub-regional climate projections to identify, understand and respond to both short and long-term climate-related risks.  Climate-related risks will be assessed through the MRC Enterprise Risk Management Framework and managed through relevant corporate strategies, plans and programs.	Material climate-related risks are identified, disclosed and managed effectively.
MRC will comply with applicable legal requirements and implement any relevant State and Federal government policies, guidelines and directives relating to climate risk management.	Legislative compliance

Principle	Outcome
<p>MRC will implement programs and initiatives that strive to increase community resilience and overall community wellbeing.</p> <p>MRC commits to effective climate risk management to strengthen community resilience for existing sites and greenfield developments.</p>	Resilient community
<p>MRC will encourage synergies with other local governments as well as State and Federal Governments to work collaboratively on projects and policies that meet the on-the-ground needs of the community. Collaboration will ensure that the respective roles and responsibilities are appropriate, and duplication is avoided.</p> <p>MRC will consider potential implications of draft State or Federal legislative changes on properties in the region including possible financial/economic impacts and lobby governments on these implications.</p>	Collaboration and shared learning

Principle	Outcome
<p>MRC builds industry and community partnerships to strengthen our influence at state and national levels, contributing to innovation, design and research, including pursuit of grants and other external funding opportunities.</p>	Productive partnerships
<p>MRC sets targets to improve regional biodiversity values and ecosystem services over time.</p>	Enhanced ecosystem services
<p>MRC maintains a corporate greenhouse gas emissions inventory and sets relevant targets to ensure operations become increasingly low carbon over time.</p>	Low carbon operations
<p>MRC will monitor community greenhouse gas emissions and set targets to facilitate the transition to a low carbon economy within the Mackay region over time.</p>	Low carbon region
<p>MRC seeks broad public involvement on climate change issues affecting the community. Engaging individuals, communities, stakeholders and businesses and adopting more open deliberations will build greater awareness of the causes and effects of climate change and promote collective responsibility for climate risk management.</p>	Community leadership and education

### 1.2 Information Sources

MRC is committed to a science-based policy approach to climate risk management. MRC's primary source of climate change information will be the most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Assessment Report and associated working group reports.

MRC will utilise regional and sub-regional climate projections for the MRC region if available from reliable sources such as the Queensland Government Department of Environment and Science and CSIRO. MRC recognises that effective responses to climate change are context-specific, and often addressed best at the local and regional levels.

### 1.3 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections

MRC will use, as a minimum, the top global Representative Concentration Pathway (currently RCP8.5) during decision making. It is an emissions scenario that describes the 'business as usual' trajectory where there is no effort to reduce emissions. MRC will take a precautionary approach with respect to long-term planning and risk assessments. As such the Planning Scheme 2017 considers the permanent inundation of land due to a sea-level rise of 0.8 metres by 2100 (relative to 1990).

### 1.4 Strategic Alignment with State Government Policy

MRC's approach to climate risk management recognises the diverse range of roles and responsibilities across all levels of government and the private sector. MRC will use the Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2017-2025 as the primary document to guide delivery of specific climate change initiatives that align with state and federal climate change adaptation and mitigation goals.

### 1.5 Climate Change Governance

MRC will maintain strong and effective governance arrangements that ensure cross program integration of climate risk management principles. MRC decisions should consider linkages between economic, environmental and community dimensions, and take account of both short and long-term impacts.

Climate risk management governance indicators will be established and monitored at the executive level to ensure continuous improvement regardless of leadership changes or short-term political influence. Where appropriate, indicators should be measurable and evaluated on a regular basis.

### 1.6 Communication

MRC commits to ensuring that the community, Councillors and staff are updated regularly regarding this policy, related programs and initiatives.

Council commits to providing clear, consistent and transparent climate change information and data which demonstrates best practice scientific knowledge. The MRC website will communicate key projects and links to reliable

information and projections. MRC will make all climate change studies undertaken by or on behalf of MRC publicly available at an appropriate time.

## 2.0 Definitions

To assist in interpretation the following definitions shall apply:

**Climate Change** shall mean the observed century-scale rise in the average temperature of the Earth's climate system and its related effects.

**Climate Change Adaptation** shall mean *proactively managing risks associated with climate change through a planned approach that takes into consideration the best available science and local climate projections.*

**Council** shall mean the Mayor and Councillors of Mackay Regional Council.

**Climate Change Mitigation** shall mean activities to reduce the extent of human induced climate change, primarily through eliminating or reducing carbon emissions entering the atmosphere.

**IPCC** shall mean Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

**MRC** shall mean Mackay Regional Council.

**Q-CAS** shall mean Queensland Climate Adaptation Strategy

**Q-CRC** shall mean Queensland Climate Resilient Councils

**Resilience** shall mean the capacity of individuals, communities and environmental systems to survive, adapt, and prosper despite experiencing chronic stresses and acute shocks. Resilient communities turn vulnerabilities into opportunities.

**Sustainability:** shall mean ensuring the way that we live today doesn't reduce the quality of life of future generations or degrade the quality of the environment they will live in. Sustainability for local government can be defined as an ongoing commitment to integrating sustainable development principles and processes into MRC operations as opposed to achieving a specific end point or goal.

## 3.0 Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed when any of the following occur:

- The related documents are amended or replaced.
- Other circumstances as determined from time to time by a resolution of Council

Notwithstanding the above, this policy is to be reviewed at intervals of no more than three (3) years.

#### 4.0 Reference

##### National Legislation

- *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

##### State Legislation

- *Local Government Act 2009*
- *Environmental Protection Act 1994*
- *Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995*
- *Disaster Management Act 2003*
- *Planning Act 2016*

##### National Strategies

- *National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy 2015*
- *Reef 2050 Long-term Sustainability Plan 2018*
- *Climate Sustainability Plan 2016-2020 (Mackay, Whitsunday, Isaac)*

##### State Strategies

- *Queensland Climate Action Plan*
- *Queensland Climate Adaptation Strategy (Q-CAS) 2017–2030 - Pathways to a climate resilient Queensland*

##### Internal Documents

- *Enterprise Risk Management Framework*
- *Corporate Plan 2021-2026*
- *Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2017-2025*
- *Economic Development Strategy 2020-2025*
- *Mackay Region Planning Scheme 2017*
- *Community Development Strategy*
- *Corporate Environmental Sustainability Policy*
- *Local Disaster Management Plan 2021*

##### Other

- *IPCC, 2014: Fifth Assessment Report (AR5)*
- *IPCC, 2021: Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group 1 to the Sixth Assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*

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Version Control:

Version	Reason / Trigger	Change	Endorsed / Reviewed	Date
1	Policy Review		ORD-2022-308	26.10.22